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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 9140
INFO RUEHAH/AMEMBASSY ASHGABAT 3677
RUEHTA/AMEMBASSY ASTANA 9887
RUEHEK/AMEMBASSY BISHKEK 4291
RUEHLM/AMEMBASSY COLOMBO 0157
RUEHDK/AMEMBASSY DAKAR 0064
RUEHDBU/AMEMBASSY DUSHANBE 0169
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD 3886
RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL 2153
RUEHKT/AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU 0245
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 0831
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO 1739
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C O N F I D E N T I A L TASHKENT 000127

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SUBJECT: ACTIVISTS RECEIVE PERMISSION TO VISIT JUMAEV IN PRISON

REF: TASHKENT 12

Classified By: POLOFF R. FITZMAURICE FOR REASONS 1.4 (B, D)

11. (C) Summary: Two members of the Rapid Reaction Group have received written permission from the Bukhara province Ministry of Internal Affairs to visit imprisoned dissident poet Yusuf Jumaev, who has been accused of striking a policeman with his car during a protest in December. Meanwhile, the Swiss Ambassador reported that his Embassy has provided a lawyer for Jumaev, although he was unsure whether the lawyer has been able to visit his client in prison. The independent Uznews website also reported on January 21 that Mashrab Jumaev, one of Yusuf Jumaev's sons, was sentenced to three years' imprisonment by a court in Bukhara for allegedly stabbing a man in the house of a local woman, though the credibility of the story has been challenged by a member of the Rapid Reaction Group. We will continue to monitor Jumaev's case and attempt to separate fact from exaggeration, but we are hopeful that any visit by the Rapid Reaction Group members to see Jumaev may pave the way for other prison visits by the group. End summary.

RAPID REACTION GROUP MEMBERS TO VISIT JUMAEV IN PRISON

12. (C) Two members of the Rapid Reaction Group, Vokhid Karimov and Abdusalom Ergashev, have received written permission from the Bukhara province Ministry of Internal Affairs to visit imprisoned dissident poet Yusuf Jumaev, who is being held along with his son Bobur at a pre-trial detention facility in Bukhara for allegedly hitting a policeman with his car during a public protest in December (reftel). Open Dialogue Project Director Mjusa Sever, who often engages with law enforcement officials on behalf of the Rapid Reaction Group, is optimistic that the visit may pave the way for future prison visits by Rapid Reaction Group members.

SWISS EMBASSY PROVIDING A LAWYER FOR JUMAEV

¶13. (C) In a discussion with the Ambassador on January 30, Swiss Ambassador Peter Burkhard said that his Embassy has arranged for a lawyer to represent Jumaev at trial. He noted that the lawyer experienced difficulty in becoming officially registered as Jumaev's lawyer. As far as Burkhard knew, the lawyer also has not been able to visit Jumaev in prison.

MASHRAB JUMAEV REPORTEDLY SENTENCED...MAYBE

¶14. (C) The independent Uznews website reported on January 21 that Mashrab Jumaev, one of Yusuf Jumaev's sons, was sentenced to three years' imprisonment by a court in Bukhara for allegedly stabbing a man in the house of a local woman. The website also reported that Yusuf Jumaev and his other son Bobur, who were arrested in Tashkent province on December 17 for striking a police officer with their car during a protest, were transferred to a prison in Bukhara province. In contrast, Rapid Reaction Group member Shukhrat Ganiev told poloff on January 25 that Mashrab Jumaev has not yet been convicted, as his case has not even been brought to trial yet. Ganiev had earlier told poloff that he had investigated the charges against Mashrab and had concluded that he was in fact guilty of stabbing the individuals (reftel).

BUKHARA STATE TV LAMBASTS JUMAEV IN DOCUMENTARY

¶15. (C) On January 21, Uzbek state TV ran a twenty-minute program on Yusuf Jumaev's case entitled "Johillik Kasofati" ("Curse of Ignorance"). The program accused Jumaev of hitting a policeman with his car and featured interviews with alleged witnesses and other persons who expressed indignation at his actions. The program also noted that "anti-constitutional" poems were found during a search of his house and ran footage of Jumaev's courtroom confession from 2001 in which he admits to praising in his poetry Erk opposition party leader Muhammad Solih and Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) leaders Tahir Yuldashev and Juma Namangani. Jumaev was originally sentenced to three years imprisonment in 2001 for anticonstitutional activities, but he was released after making his courtroom confession.

COMMENT

¶16. (C) As the Jumaev family saga continues to unfold, we will continue to try to confirm the facts behind the case. It is interesting that the Government decided to run a documentary about Yusuf Jumaev, which would appear at first glance to draw more attention to his family's plight. Possibly, the government is seeking to counter some of the allegations made by Jumaev's other son Alisher, which have been widely reported on independent websites.

¶17. (C) The news that the members of the Rapid Reaction Group have received permission to visit Jumaev in prison is a positive step indeed, and we agree with Sever that it may pave the way for future prison visits by the group. Currently, there are no independent monitors visiting Uzbek prisons, where we believe a majority of Uzbekistan's human rights abuses are occurring. We also are continuing to press the Uzbeks and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) to reach agreement on resuming the ICRC's prison monitoring program, which has been suspended since December 2004.

NORLAND